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Theodore Roosevelt National Park

News Release

Immediate Release

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South Unit Backcountry and Hiking Trails to Be Closed Midweek

Backcountry areas and hiking trails in the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park will be closed on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays from October 19 – January 20 to accommodate the park's elk reduction effort.

"For safety reasons, we are closing the park's backcountry and hiking trails three days per week while teams are shooting elk in the park to reduce the herd," said Superintendent Valerie Naylor. "We regret having to close any portion of the park at any time. However, this is necessary to ensure visitor safety and to enhance the effectiveness of the elk reduction teams."

No entrance fees will be charged in the South Unit on the days when the backcountry areas are closed.

The elk reduction effort was planned so that the backcountry areas and trails in the South Unit would be open Friday – Monday when visitation is highest. The South Unit's roads and overlooks, as well as Cottonwood Campground, will be open daily. The four frontcountry trails in the South Unit - Buck Hill, Wind Canyon, Ridgeline Nature Trail, and Coal Vein Trail - will remain open.

The completion of an Elk Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement in June 2010 cleared the way for the National Park Service to reduce the size of the elk herd. The selected alternative is for teams comprised of a National Park Service team leader and up to 4 volunteers to reduce the elk population with firearms. Elk will be packed out of the park and donated to American Indian Tribes, charities, and the North Dakota Game and Fish Department (NDGFD). The NDGFD will have the option of donating some of the meat back to the volunteers who assisted with the elk reduction effort.

"The North Unit and Elkhorn Ranch Unit are not affected by the elk reduction effort, and we encourage hikers to enjoy those areas this fall and early winter," said Naylor.

The park visitor center in Medora will be open daily from 8 – 4:30 pm except for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years Day. The Painted Canyon Visitor Center is open daily through November 11.

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